

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT M 01511 200715Z
ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2728
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
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AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 1511

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR PFOR PP AS
SUBJ: INTELLIGENCE APPROACH BACKFIRES

1. SUMMARY: THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER EXPRESSED FORMAL REGRETS TO ACTING PM CHAN ON OCTOBER 19 FOLLOWING AN APPROACH BY ONE OF ITS JOINT INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION (JIO) TO A DEAN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA (UPNG). USING EXCEPTIONALLY POOR JUDGMENT, THE JIO OFFICER HAD SOUGHT INFORMATION ON STUDENTS ASSOCIATED WITH IRIAN JAYA FROM DEAN BRIAN BROGAN, A FORMER SENIOR ADVISOR TO EX-PM WHITLAM, A HARSH CRITIC OF THE JIO. THE EPISODE HAS BEEN HIGHLY EMBARRASSING TO THE AUSTRALIANS AND PROBABLY DISTASTEFUL TO THE GPNG. INDONESIAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, TOLD US IT WAS OF NO CONCERN TO THEM. END SUMMARY.

2. A SINGULARLY UNINTELLIGENT APPROACH TO INTELLIGENCE HAS CAUSED THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION SERIOUS EMBARRASSMENT. ON OCTOBER 18, PROFESSOR BRIAN BROGAN, DEAN OF THE ARTS FACULTY AT UPNG, ANNOUNCED THAT LINDSEY BURRIDGE, FIRST
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SECRETARY (POLITICAL) OF THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION, HAD ASKED HIM TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE RECORDS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND EX-STUDENTS WITH IRIAN JAYA BACKGROUND OR ASSOCIATIONS. BROGAN WENT PUBLIC, SAYING HE "WOULD NOT BE A SPY FOR AUSTRALIA BECAUSE THE TRUST THAT ACADEMICS OWED THEIR STUDENTS WAS TOO GREAT". THE HIGH COMMISSION LIMITED ITSELF TO CONFIRMING THAT BURRIDGE WAS AN

OFFICER OF THE JOINT INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION (JIO) WITH THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THE GPNG.

3. THE POST-COURIER OF THE 19TH CARRIED THE STORY AND EDITORIALY DEPLORED THE EPISODE, STATING THAT THE GPNG HAD ENOUGH PROBLEMS TO WORRY ABOUT WITH RESPECT TO THE IRIAN JAYA SITUATION WITHOUT ITS "CLOSEST ALLIES" MUDDYING THE WATERS. THE EDITORIAL ATTEMPTED, HOWEVER, TO DRAW ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE AUSTRALIANS BY POINTING OUT THAT THERE ARE OTHER DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN PORT MORESBY AND MORE THAN ONE INTELLIGENCE OFFICER AROUND.

4. ACTING PRIME MINISTER CHAN MET WITH AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER CRITCHLEY FOR FOUR HOURS ON OCT 19. THE MEDIA REPORTED THAT CRITCHLEY HAD EXPRESSED FORMAL REGRETS TO THE PNG AND ASSURED THE GPNG THAT AUSTRALIA HAD NOT ESTABLISHED AND DID NOT INTEND TO ESTABLISH A SPY NETWORK IN PNG. CHAN REPORTEDLY WAS TOLD THAT JIO WOULD ONLY HELP SET UP AN INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT OFFICE IN THE PNG SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION. ACCORDING TO THE MEDIA, CHAS WAS SATISFIED WITH THE ASSURANCES HE HAD RECEIVED, ALTHOUGH HE SAID THAT THE GPNG VIEWED THE MATTER WITH "SERIOUSNESS".

5. STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY MET ON OCT 19, AND DECIDED TO MARCH ON THE CENTRAL GPNG OFFICES AND ON THE NEARBY HIGH COMMISSION TO PROTEST "FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN PNG". HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MARCH WAS PUT OFF UNTIL OCT 21.

6. COMMENT: THE AUSTRALIANS ARE NOT ONLY EMBARRASSED BUT ANGRY. SENIOR HIGH COMMISSION OFFICERS EXPRESSED CONTEMPT FOR BURRIDGE, WHO ACTED WITH UNBELIEVABLY POOR JUDGMENT. BURRIDGE HAD BEEN A LECTURER AT UPNG A FEW YEARS AGO AND HE KNEW THE ATMOSPHERE THERE. MORE INCREDIBLE, HOWEVER, WAS THE FACT THAT HE APPROACHED BROGAN, A FORMER SENIOR ADVISOR TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM, WHO HAS BEEN EXTREMELY CRITICAL OF THE JIO. BORGAN TOOK FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO BLAST THE JIO, AN OPPORTUNITY HANDED HIM ON A SILVER PLATTER BY THE ORGANIZATION.

7. THE INDONESIANS YESTERDAY TOLD US THEY GAVE THE MATTER LITTLE IMPORTANCE AS FAR AS THEY WERE CONCERNED.
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